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THE YELLOW EARTH

**ZHU JIAHE HOPED TO BE A CARPENTER WHEN HE GREW UP:
INSTEAD HE BECAME AN ARTIST. HIS ART CAPTURES THE
CLOTHING AND CULTURE OF LIFE ON THE LOESS PLATEAU. P.4**



北京青年报
BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

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FEATURE



Photo by newslocker.com

Sex Dolls Offer Prostitution Alternative, Escape from Rejection

BY WANG YAN

Chinese social media sites have been atwitter with discussion over a picture series depicting a 28-year-old man and his sex doll. The pictures show the man hugging his doll in front of a sunlit window, staring lovingly into its eyes and kissing the dolls hand.

The photo series claims the man has cancer and took the pictures because he didn't want to leave behind a widow. More cynical readers believe the series is a viral marketing campaign for the sex dolls manufacturer.

But regardless of the truth or untruth the images depict, they speak to reflect the growing acceptance of pleasure dolls in sexually conservative China.

The Market of Sex Toys

Wen Jingfeng is the godfather of modern Chinese sex. In 1993, Wen opened China's first sex shop – Adam and Eve – on Zhao

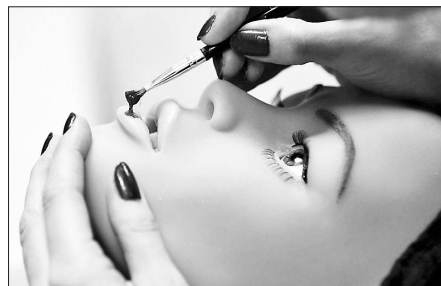


Photo by big5China.com

dengyu Road in Beijing. The shop mostly dealt in aphrodisiacs until 2003, when the government removed sex toys from its list of "controlled medical apparatuses."

"That day marked the birth of China's sex toy market," Lin Degang, founder of the sex toy megastore Chun Shuntang wrote in his book *Adult Beauty*.

Guangzhou opened what remains Chinas largest adult products market in 1997. The spacious 3,000-square-meter

mall offers almost every kind of sex toy, and most of the vendors also deal in realistic sex dolls.

For cheap things, people usually just shop on Taobao. For more expensive stuff they want to actually see the product," one of the shop owners told a writer for Letu Travel. Celebrity look-alike sex dolls with sweet voices are the most popular, he said. In 2008, some Chinese media reported that the market capacity reached 100 billion yuan and was growing by 20 percent annually. As in many such reports in China, the figures were woefully inflated.

Taobao's sales records in February 2014 showed that the site sold an average of 200 million yuan in sex products each month. *Southern Weekly* estimated that the yearly revenue of Taobao's sex products is 2.4 billion yuan. Taobao accounts for 80 percent of China's online sales, making higher numbers especially difficult to imagine.

Lin said in 2013 that the value of China's sex products market was 30 billion yuan, adding that the majority of Chinese customers only buy condoms.

Why Sex Dolls?

Searching for sex dolls on Taobao reveals around 5,000 items for sale. Price range from 250 yuan for inflatable dolls to more than 10,000 yuan for life-size dolls made of thermoplastic elastomer. In the top tier of sex dolls, customers can customize the doll's eye color, skin color, hair color, breast size and vaginal depth.

Zhang Han, a MICDOLL (brands name) owner, told *Vice UK* that there are three reasons people buy sex dolls: "First, to satisfy a physiological need. Second, to take photos with and share with others. Third, cosplay."

Zhongwa.net is China's largest sex doll forum, and its popular section has more than 290,000 posts. Sex doll users meet there to discuss doll brands and share pictures and their experiences with the dolls.

A forum user, Haowangjiao, said he felt sex dolls were much better than real women.

"I like gentle and obedient girls. I don't want my girl to be ugly. But the reality is that pretty girls are usually arrogant, have a bad temper and make you waste time trying to please them. They don't know how to do housework. Those who know how to do housework are usually ugly and fat," he wrote.

It's hard to say to what extent his views reflect the mainstream. But many young men remain open to using sex dolls. "There are a lot of ways to meet women unless you have problems with shyness or socializing," said a 27-year-old man surnamed Huang.

While the primary use of sex dolls is sex, many middle-aged business owners see dolls as a way to remain faithful. Lin Degang wrote in *Adult Beauty* about how businessman buy high-end sex dolls to avoid taking a lover or turning to prostitutes while living apart from their spouse.

A 29-year-old sex doll owner surnamed Liu told *Japan Times* that he wanted a sex doll because he could only see his wife once a week and the doll could satisfy his needs without cheating on his wife.

Tender Dreams or Bitter Loneliness?

Zhang, the MICDOLL owner, told *Vice* that his doll could satisfy his most tender dreams and desires. However beautiful that may sound, it's unlikely that a voluptuous and lifeless sex doll can replicate a human connection.

While some see sex dolls as toys or tools for avoiding infidelity, sex dolls can also be an emotional crutch for avoiding rejection.

In the article on *Japan Times*, Liu said a doll is better than a real woman because it won't reject or resist, so people can do whatever they want with it.

A poll conducted on the Zhongwa forum found that only 20 percent of sex doll users say they feel the urge to kiss their dolls while the remaining 80 percent said the dolls were only for sex. A Taobao sex doll seller said that is common in new sex doll owners. Most people buy a doll for sex, companionship or take photos, but later become more emotionally invested in the doll. A few users buy the doll purely for companionship. One Zhonghua user named Rounima wrote that he only talks to his doll.

"I just want to talk to her. I don't want to have sex with her. I just need someone listen to me," Rounima wrote.

Many doll users on the forum give their dolls cute names and record details of life with their synthetic partners.

Song Bo, a 3D game designer, had the same experience. His doll has become an "artificial daughter" he uses to cope with the depression of a cancer diagnosis. The doll, named Xiaodie, is a regular feature in his Internet writings where he explains how he dresses her, paints her nails and brings her to talks.

In an interview with Xinhua, Song said he had spent lots of money on Xiaodie but "its all worth it, because nothing can beat the satisfaction Xiaodie has brought me."

Qzyhzf, another Zhongwa forum user, explained why he wanted the doll. "I am hugely disappointed by women and marriage. My dolls are my spiritual comfort," he wrote. "It's just too hard to have a beautiful girlfriend," wrote Aub, another form user.

Loneliness, fear of rejection and self-doubt seem to be the reasons behind owning a sex doll. And that fear is not limited to Chinese doll owners.

In 2006, Nick Holt directed the documentary *Guys and Dolls* in which many sex doll owners said the dolls "improved" or even "saved" their lives. "I can tolerate being alone, but not loneliness," a 32-year-old man said.

In his book *The Sex Doll: A History*, Anthony Ferguson writes "a sex doll provides a good anatomical representation of a woman for intercourse without the usual prerequisites of social interaction, and without the possibility of rejection. The fear of rejection is significant, especially for the man who is socially awkward."

While the pain of social rejection is universally acknowledged, the safe option of choosing to hide behind a perfect doll may not be the wisest approach. ■

MUSIC



Gentle Grape The Search for Positive Punk

BY DIAO DIAO

"Being young means being confused, but it also means sticking to what you want even when you can't predict what's up ahead," Li Xuezheng said.

Li Xuezheng is the lead singer and guitarist of Gentle Grape, a new band that has been winning fans in the local indie scene. The band was founded by Li Xuezheng and his friends at China University of Mining and Technology.

Li's music education began in elementary school when he started to study classic guitar. That hobby turned into something more when he reached high school and met Liu Kai-rong, with whom he would eventually form Gentle Grape.

As students, they formed Dangerous Action, their first band. The group broke up and placed their musical dreams on hold until Liu met Baozi, a bass player at his college. Together, the three won over drummer Gui Zixuan, and a new band was formed.

The search for a name led Li Xuezheng to steal his brother's username from an online game: Gentle Grape. Looking back, the members like how they chose the name more than the name itself.

Gentle Grape plays "new school" music influenced by the members' appreciation of Blink 182, Sum 41, Metallica, Mr. Big and AC/DC. Although punk fans at heart, they reject the genre's noise origins for something more energetic and positive.



Photos by Gentle Grape

Unlike other bands that came up through the art scene, Gentle Grape's lineup consists of science tract students who learned music by making mistakes in their free time rather than through formal education.

Liu Rongkai attempted to start a band even earlier than Li. When in middle school, he started learning some of the basics of guitar with a few friends, but their effort fell apart before they even settled on a name. Liu's college years finally brought him enough free time to seriously study the instrument.

During high school, Liu and Lu

realized they wanted music to be a core part of their lives. "The headmaster of our high school promised to let us perform for the school. That was really amazing because high school students were supposed to prepare for the National College Entrance Exam," Li says. "We were young, but we realized immediately just how much we liked singing on the stage."

Baozi said he spent his high school years listening to Beyond and watching their music videos until he decided that he wanted to be the same as Huang Jiaju, the core person of Beyond who had just passed away.

Life in the indie circle has been stressful – especially because Beijing's indie scene puts them in competition with so many excellent bands. The capital's music fans are notoriously tough to retain, and the only hook that keeps them coming back is raw originality.

Where many bands are struggling to survive, Gentle Grape sees the money they spend on their group as an investment. "This is the time when we have to be devoting our money and time to the music. It's too soon to think about earning money," Baozi said.

"No Return from the Unknown" is the band's most popular single and the members' favorite. It describes the confusion of youth and draws on their personal stories.

Gentle Grape is currently recording its second album, which will be released in 2016. ■

LIVE SHOW ROUNDUP

Beijing boasts one of the world's most vibrant indie music scenes. Support our local artists with a trip to one of this week's live performances!

Cicada @ Yugong Yishan

The neoclassical band Cicada was founded in Taiwan in 2009. Its songs feature piano, wooden guitar, fiddle, viola and cello. The band released popular albums in 2011, 2012 and 2015, but lamented that so few of their fans ever heard their music. Cicada is currently touring many Chinese cities.

🕒 December 4, 8:30-10:30 pm
📍 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng
💎 100 yuan (pre sale), 120 yuan (at door)

Peng Jun & Xiaoxiong @ MAO Live House

The vocalist of Frog Band, Peng Jun, and folk singer Xiaoxiong will perform at MAO Live House with Du Du, bassist of Frog Band, guitarist Huang Chao and drummer Jiang Jun. Peng Jun wrote the song used in the popular radio drama *So Young*, and Xiaoxiong has a clean and warm voice.

🕒 November 5, 8-11:30 pm
📍 111 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng
💎 80 yuan

Chris Garneau @ MAO Live House

Chris Garneau is an American singer and songwriter. Chris was born in 1982 in Boston, moved to Paris at the age of 8 and returned to New York for school. His sense of music is influenced by his years in Paris. Many songs on his first album, *Music for Tourist*, were used in American TV series such as "Sad News" in *Private Practice* and "Castle Time" and "Black and Blue" in *Grey's Anatomy*.

🕒 December 4, 8:30-10 pm
📍 111 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng
💎 150 yuan (pre sale), 200 yuan (at door)



Haggard @ Tango

Haggard is a band from Munich, Germany founded in 1991. The band has 16 members, and they combine death metal and classical strings. At first they only played death metal, but their style changed when a classical musician joined the band in 1995. This is the band's first tour to China.

🕒 December 4, 8:30-10:30 pm
📍 79 Hepingli Xijie, Dongcheng
💎 380 yuan (pre sale), 500 yuan (at door), 300 yuan (early bird)

ARTISTS



The Hope Project No.2



Commune Members



What Can I Do to Save You No.2

Painting the Culture of the Rural Northwest

BY SHU PENGQIAN



Voice from Heaven



Men



Party at the Night



The Artist Zhu Jiahe

The vast yellow Loess Plateau is considered the birthplace of Chinese civilization. It's also the birthplace of artist Zhu Jiahe's inspiration.

Born in Qingjian County, Shaanxi province — right in the center of the plateau — Zhu uses his brush to capture and protect the cultural heritage associated with the yellow earth.

His representative paintings *Scene*, *Ordinary World*, *Commune Members* and *Party at the Night* feature red-cheeked workers dancing, making pancakes and watching shadowpuppet shows. The scenes capture the distinctive clothes and local customs of everyday life on the plateau.

"Art stems from life," Zhu said. "This yellow land cultivated me, and when I paint it I do so with great facility."

A naked child always appears in the paintings — sometimes seated and sometimes standing. The strange child appears to have been dropped into each picture to appreciate the show, but Zhu avoids mentioning exactly what it represents in each picture.

While many young artists insist they always pursued a career in the craft, Zhu says his own dream was more down to earth: he wanted to be a carpenter.

"When I was in primary school, the teacher assigned all of us to write an article about what we wanted to do in the future. I wrote, 'My dream is to be a carpenter,'" Zhu said, "The teacher told me my composition was fine, but my dream was poor."

Zhu's small dream didn't come true. He eventually entered the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts to study painting in 1999 and went on to teach in the Chang'an University Academy of Arts after graduation.

A stable job and a comfortable life should have made him satisfied, but a second-place win at a 2003 art show convinced him to hone his craft. Zhu quit his job in 2004 to head to Shanghai for a new job and to the Central Academy of Fine Art.

However, Zhu did not like the new company. "I like painting freely instead of painting for the market," he said. He quit his job again and spent several years in poverty.

Today he had made Shanghai his home.

Inspired by Shanghai's decisions to follow Beijing in knocking down its traditional buildings, Zhu began working on his *What Can I Do to Save You* series. The paintings depict people playing or standing on ruined walls while surrounded by modern buildings. His similar *Left-Behind Population* is a series that explores the lives of retirees and children neglected for the sake of career growth.

Not content to merely depict social problems, Zhu has also contributed his art to charity auctions since 2007.

"It's not about getting exposure. Real charity is done without seeking anything in return — except maybe from God," Zhu said. "Seeing a satisfied and happy expression on the face of whoever benefits from my work is enough." ■



What Can I Do to Save You No.5



What Can I Do to Save You No.1



Left-Behind Population No.5

artand.cn/jiahezhu

A TRAVEL



Beijing on a Budget: To Save in December, Do as the Locals

BY SIMINA MISTREANU

Between Singles' Day shopping and the winter holiday, December is a good month to give your wallet a breather. Beijing is not a cheap city to live in. In fact, it was the seventh most expensive city for expats in the world according to a 2015 study by Mercer consultants.

But Beijing still offers plenty of opportunities for free or affordable activities and foods: most of them lie off the expat radar.

Quiet communities with parks and temples offer many authentic – and affordable – experiences.

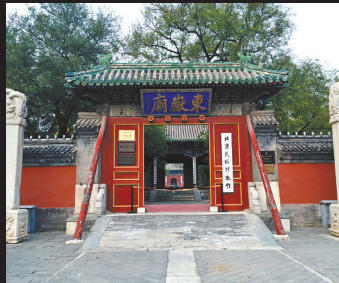
The secret is to look around and copy what the locals are doing, whether that's strolling alongside Houhai and munching on fried squid or having dinner at a local joint on the west side.

Houhai and Nanluogu Xiang

Houhai visitors will notice, especially during the warmer seasons, crowds strolling along the shore, with apparently no purpose or direction. Instead of getting annoyed because you can't pass them easily, join them.

Buy some deep-fried squid or candied hawthorns on a stick (*tanghulu*) and enjoy the walk, the lake and the people-watching.

Continue on to the hutongs, through East Gulou Avenue and Nanluogu Xiang for window-shopping and more snacks. When you get hungry, stop for a meal at Chilli Crush, a lovely and affordable restaurant hidden in a quiet courtyard.



CFP Photos

Wudaokou

For college-town atmosphere and prices, go to the Wudaokou neighborhood in Haidian district. The area is close to major universities such as Tsinghua University, Peking University and Beihang University. It's also an interesting transportation node, with heavy rail crossing under the subway station at an intersection that sees many pedestrians.

Its restaurants and bars offer good and cheap food, live music and games. A local favorite is Lush, which acts as a diner by day and bar by night. Hearty omelets stuffed with veggies and served with toast, along with free-refill coffee will cost no more than 50 yuan. Many restaurants have menus in Korean, a nod to the large Korean community that lives here.

West Side

If you live in the east or central part of town, you probably have few reasons to travel to the west side. But Beijing's old military neighborhoods have a lot to offer. Take for example Military Museum, the only one of its kind in China. The museum was built in 1959 to celebrate People's Republic of China's 10th anniversary. Its exhibits range from representations of ancient battles using wax figurines to modern fighter jets. Admission is free if you present an ID or passport.

Discover some of the locals' favorite restaurants. One nameless restaurant serves delicious food near the intersection of Beitaping Road and Caishi South Road. Lamb with chives, beef with green peppers and fish cooked straight from the tank are served in a chill atmosphere, aided by bottles of Yanjing beer. The restaurant is run by a woman whom patrons respectfully call *laoban*, or boss lady.

Temples

Beijing's most famous temples, such as Lama Temple and Confucius Temple, charge entry fees around 25 to 30 yuan. But visit one of the capital's more discreet temples, and you'll pay less and avoid the crowds.

The Daoist temple Dongyue Temple is located by the busy commercial area of Yabaolu. The quiet temple is one of the most fascinating in Beijing. It features 76 "departments" of the supernatural bureaucracy, which are populated by hundreds of plaster deities and creatures. For a 10 yuan entry fee, visitors can pray and offer incense to deities promising to accomplish a variety of actions, from bringing rain and enabling offspring to implementing "15 kinds of violent death."

Parks

Beijingers love their parks, where they go for their evening fast walks, to practice tai chi or to take a boat out on the lake.

Some parks charge entry fees, but others are free. Tuanjiehu Park in Chaoyang district is part of the latter. The park has a lake with an island, as well as a man-made rock installation. During the day, mothers and grandmothers bring children for a stroll or a boat ride. At night, the alleys under the willow trees fill with locals walking fast in the same direction as part of their evening exercise.

After the walk, go to Yaojiayuan Road for a choice of local restaurants that serve delicious spicy noodles, beef noodles or dumplings.

Atmosphere

A lounge bar on the 80th floor of the China World Trade Center doesn't sound like a budget outing. But on a clear day, the restaurant offers sweeping views of the city. And for 65 yuan for a cocktail and 42 yuan for a glass of wine, it still is cheaper than a ticket to go on the observation deck on the CCTV Tower, which costs 70 yuan (no drinks included). Raising a glass near the clouds is a great way to celebrate your restraint and welcome the winter holidays. ■



ENTERTAINMENT



Taiwan's 'Pure Love' a Cure for Social Ills

BY DIAO DIAO

After three years of preparation, four months of shooting and NT \$80 million (15.7 million yuan), the Taiwan-made *Our Times* was unveiled to audiences. Unsurprisingly, it's yet another Taiwan-style love story focused on the experiences of four high school students.

Lin Zhenxin is an ordinary school girl who is extremely insensitive. Like most girls, she develops a crush on Ouyang Feifan, her school's handsomest and smartest boy.

Xu Taiyu is also a well-known student in the school. He is smart and handsome, but he doesn't study and always ends up in fights. Xu's favorite girl is Tao Minmin, widely regarded as the best in the school.

When Lin and Xu find out that Ouyang and Tao are dating, they join forces to ruin the couple's young love. Their blundering attempts end up becoming the joke of the school.

However, Xu gradually finds that Lin is a kind and simple girl and he falls in love with her. Lin also develops feelings for Xu. The two give up their plans and stay together in the end.

Leading actress Song Yunhua sacrificed her face to play the average Lin. The producing team spent heavily to bring in guest talents like Hong Kong heartthrob Andy Lau and Taiwan actress Chen Qiaoen.

At a time when mainland-produced

shows have started introducing sex and abortion as plot elements, the innocent and tired clichés of Taiwanese storytelling seem fresh and pure.

Meteor Garden and *The Blue Gate* were two hit Taiwanese TV series and films in the 1990s. The actors and actresses and simple stories became the model for all Taiwanese teen entertainment – even more than a decade later.

Two months ago, the Taiwan-produced series *Mingruo Xiaoxi* aired on Hunan TV. Many viewers complained that the story resembled *Meteor Garden*, made by the same company in the 1990s. That didn't stop it from being the network's top show.

Tencent Entertainment said much of the atmosphere of Taiwanese films comes from the island's different approach to cinema. Many actors and actresses are found by talent scouts rather than recruited through acting academies.

Ordinary people seem to be better at playing ordinary people than professional actors.

Compared with Hong Kong youth films which focus on fighting, gangsters and aggression, Taiwan shows tend to be positive and have a happy ending.

In a society that is increasingly sick and complicated, true love and tired clichés deeply touch more viewers than ever. ■



Running Moonlight Arrives on the Big Screen

BY DIAO DIAO

Chen Jianbin recently made his directorial debut in *A Fool*, which arrived in Chinese theaters on November 20.

The Chinese name of the film is *Yige Shaozi*. Shaozi in the northwestern dialect is Shazi, which means a fool. The story is based on Chinese writer Hu Xuewen's novel *Running Moonlight*.

The farmer Latiaozi meets a foolish beggar who follows him home. Latiaozi decides to post a notice to help the fool find his family. Soon someone spots the message and comes to Latiaozi. After the man takes the fool away, more people show up

and claim to be the fool's family. In the end, Latiaozi ends up another fool while trying to track down the fool to prove he didn't lie.

Chen said he discovered the original story on *Renmin Wenxue*. He read it twice and was touched by the realism in the story and how it described a situation that anyone could encounter.

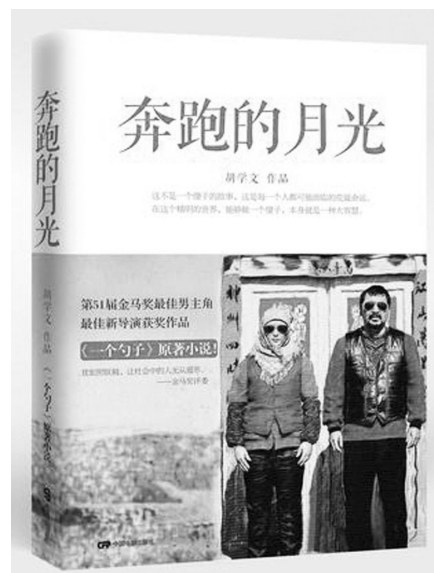
Hu Xuewen was the winner of the sixth Luxun Literary Awards. He published a collection this year that includes six of his novels that have been made into films, including *Jidi Caihong*, *Flying Woman*, *Eat*

Hot Tofu Slowly, *Tracking Kong Lingxue*, *Xiangyangpo* and this year's *A Fool*.

Hu Xuewen's writing focuses on ordinary life and common struggles.

Most of his stories are based on life experiences on the grasslands and a small village of kind and simple people. He seldom read books when he was young, but later he went out to study and found his love for writing.

Hu's stories feature the lives of villagers in modern times. The battle that ordinary people wage with their destiny is an ongoing theme in his work. ■



Photos by douban.com

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Q CLASSIFIEDS

ART



Visions: Through and in the Unknown

What we see is an infinitesimal part of an invisible world. Visions manifesting an unknown reality, spontaneously depicted through the lens and turned into a photographic illusion of magnificence. It is like sculpting into the diffractions of light and into the depth of a parallel universe, a microcosm of striking colors, shapes and molecules that fluctuate randomly like planets in a "primordial soup." These abstract and psychedelic images are the result of a three-year project and a passion for macro photography, for how it unveils and reveals the unknown to the eye.

⌚ 5 pm, December 13

📍 Zarah, 46 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng

COMMUNITY



Family Fun Day with Hong Kong International Medical Clinic

Hong Kong International Medical Clinic, Beijing is hosting a Family Fun Day at the Banquet Hall of the Swissotel on Saturday, December 5.

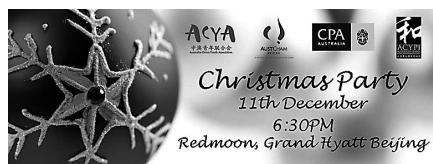
Various healthcare professionals — including a general practitioner, pediatrician, dentist, Chinese medicine practitioner, physiotherapist and dermatologist — will be on-site to dole out health advice and suggestions through a "free inquiry desk." Children will be entertained with a Magical Forest theme party.

The event will also feature a charity auction with the proceeds going toward children in need.

⌚ 2-8 pm, December 5

✉ service@hkclinic.com

🌐 hkclinic.com/en/news



Aussie Christmas Party

Can you hear that rock? That jingle bell rock? Can you smell the tinsel, the ball balls and cinnamon in the air? Are you ready for the Christmas time queues, last minute present shopping and rolls and rolls of wrapping paper?

If not, you will be, as the festive season will soon be upon us! When it is, be sure to look out for Rudolf's red nose to guide your sleigh right down to the Aussie Christmas Party!

Supported by CPA Australia, ACYA and ACYPI, the Aussie Community in Beijing will be treated to Christmas-themed mouthwatering buffet stations, cheap drinks and a live band performing Christmas carols.

⌚ 6:30-9 pm, December 11

📍 Redmoon, Grand Hyatt Beijing, 1 Dong Chang'an Jie, Dongcheng

✉ events@austcham.org

MUSIC



Hutong Yellow Weasels, Honky Tonk Demons and Barn Dance (US.)

The Hutong Yellow Weasels, featuring fiddle, banjo and sweet vocal harmonies, play traditional American mountain music, spirituals and melodies that British settlers carried with them across the Atlantic Ocean.

The Honky Tonk Demons, put together by songwriter Randy Abel, offer an international take on American music. They feature cellist Heike Kagler of Germany, accordionist Marie-Claude LeBel of Quebec, guitarist Dan Taylor of England, violinist Kirk Kenney of the US and banjo player and bassist Chris Hawke of Canada.

The evening will climax with the audience taking part in a traditional American barn dance. A musician will slowly teach the audience a series of easy group dances. Music will be provided by an all-star band.

⌚ 9:30-11 pm, December 10

📍 DDC, 14 Shanlao Hutong, Dongcheng

💎 50 yuan (at door); 40 yuan (pre-sale)



The Nightcrawlers @Jianghu Bar

The Nightcrawlers is a Chicago blues band formed by Chicago Blues legend Tom Wilson, Beijing Blues veteran Weiwei, Wang Zheng, China's top blues guitar and harmonica player Eric Yu and Xiaosong.

These cats will start playing materials from Mississippi delta blues masters like Robert Johnson and Albert King to Chicago blues giants Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy.

Band leader Tom Wilson has played with John Lee Hooker, Hubert Sumlin, Albert Collins, Bobby Blue Bland, Buddy Guy, Jimmy Witherspoon, James Cotton and Lightnin' Hopkins. Weiwei is the best Texas style blues guitar player on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. The Nightcrawlers promise to offer a surprising night to Beijing's bar-goers.

⌚ 9-11:45 pm, December 4

📍 Jianghu Bar, Dongcheng

💎 50 yuan (at door); 40 yuan (pre-sale)

STAGE

'Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus' One-Night Performance

"Is there a Santa Claus?" eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon writes to the editor of the *New York Sun* newspaper in 1897. The newspaper's heartfelt reply, printed on the front page and written by a reporter struggling with the death of his wife, has been part of American Christmas folklore for more than 100 years.

This performance by Charity Readers Theater will donate the revenue from all ticket sales to charity. Beneficiaries include Maple Women's Counseling Center.

Charity Readers Theatre, presented by Beijing Playhouse Drama Club, is all about acting. There are almost no costumes, no props, no sets, no lighting design, no sound design and no subtitles. As a readers' theatre, the actors will carry scripts to refer to. Charity Readers Theatre is an artistic process

where actors rehearse for only one week. At the end of that week they offer only one performance.

All Charity Readers Theatre shows are designed for families. This Christmas show is appropriate for ages 6 and up.

⌚ 7:30-10:30 pm, December 19

📍 Beijing Playhouse, 5 Houbalizhuang, Yew Chung Int'l School, east gate of Honglingjin Park, Chaoyang

💎 80 yuan



Handel's Messiah

Join IFC for its 13th annual Messiah performance, to be held this year at Harrow International School Beijing. A fixture on Beijing's holiday calendar, don't miss the stirring performance by IFC with its sister orchestra Peking Sinfonietta and UK guest bass soloist Jeremy Williams.

Tickets include a free round-trip shuttle from the Kempinski Hotel departing at 6:15 pm. Children must be at least seven years of age and in possession of a concert ticket to attend the performance.

Please book a bus seat on your Yoopay order. The bus will depart from outside the Kempinski Hotel on Liangmaqiao Lu at 6:15pm. It will depart from the concert venue shortly after the concert ends at about 10 pm, returning to Kempinski at approximately 10:30 pm.

⌚ 7-10 pm, December 5

📍 Harrow International School Beijing, 287 Hegezhuang Village, Cuigezhuang, Chaoyang

💎 280 yuan; 180 yuan

CULTURE



Berlin Bazar

Cold lemonade or beer, grilled German sausages, pretty second-hand treasures and good music can put everyone in a good mood. On December 5, Zeit Berlin will host a Bazaar with a flea market, barbecued German sausages, face painting, photography, music and homemade lemonade and cold draft beer.

⌚ 11 am-5 pm, December 5

📍 Zeit Berlin, 1/F Royal Palace Hotel, 6 Xiaoyunli, Chaoyang

💎 Free

FOODS



Photo by Jikangda.com

Food Picks for Snowy Weather

BY WANG YAN

Days of snowy weather have helped to clean up Beijing's polluted skies while coating the city in a layer of white snow and ice. This issue of *Beijing Today* picks out four types of foods for the beautiful snowy weather.

Vegetable: Lotus Root

The crunchy, delicate flavored lotus root is a popular vegetable. Almost every part of the lotus plant can be used in cuisine, but the root is the most commonly served. Lotus-based dishes have been popular in Chinese and Japanese cultures for centuries.

Winter is the right season for eating lotus root. It is said that eating more lotus root can reduce winter dryness and help hydrate the body. The vegetable can improve digestion, reduce cholesterol, lower blood pressure, boost the immune system, pre-

vent various forms of cancer, balance one's mood and relieve depression.

Lotus roots contain a large amount of carbohydrates, proteins and different vitamins. The dietary fiber the vegetable contains can also help cure constipation. Lotus root is best cooked with wood ear and snow fungus.

Dish: Hotpot

Nothing beats the happiness of watching steamy air rise over a hot pot. Hotpot, called *huoguo* in Chinese, originated in Mongolia more than 1000 years ago.

Many varieties of hotpot exist, and each region of China has its own method and ingredients. Traditionally, people gather and eat around one large pot placed in the center of a table. This circular formation symbolizes unity and good luck for the

whole family.

Although hotpot is known for its high calories, there are ways to keep your intake under control. When choosing the soup for the hotpot, stick to the less-spicy one because spicy broth may cause an imbalance in one's body. In addition, the selected meat should be paired with vegetables.

Drink: Huang Jiu (Yellow Wine)

Huangjiu is one of the oldest drinks. Unlike other types of alcohols, it contains 18 different kinds of amino acids. The wine is said to improve the immune system, and Chinese medicine claims it is good for the stomach and spleen. Yellow wine is best served warm, between 35 °C to 45 °C.

It's also recommended that you add dark plump into your yellow wine. ■

Photos by nicipic



Enjoy Hotpot at Nanmen Shuanrou

BY WANG YAN

It would not be appropriate to neglect Nanmen Shuanrou when talking about hotpot restaurants in Beijing.

With five branches in Beijing, Nanmen Shuanrou is one of the best-known hotpot restaurants in the city. And customers usually have to wait for hours to get a table.

The restaurant is known for serving authentic hotpot in traditional coal-fired bronze pots in refreshingly unpretentious surroundings. The broth, meat and vegetables are all fresh, and the outdoor courtyard seats at the Houhai branch are particularly pleasant on summer evenings.

But eating the hotpot in a snowy day while watching the beautiful lake that is covered with snow is even more enjoyable.

The restaurant is highly recommended for out-of-towners seeking a real "Old Beijing" food experience.

Commonly ordered meats include lamb and beef slices and cuttlefish balls. Many Dianping users praised the freshness of the meat and the variety of food the restaurant provided.

The waiters and waitresses are reportedly helpful and friendly, and very good at helping you rein in your orders to suit the size of your party.

For those who want to gather with friends on a cold winter night, Nanmen Shuanrou is definitely a good choice. ■



Photos by Dianping.com

MAKE YOUR OWN WITH THIS RECIPE

Learn to Make Lamb Soup

BY WANG YAN

Lamb soup is popular across China, especially in the northwest. It is considered as "hot" food by Chinese medicine and thus beneficial for warming the body. It's the perfect soup for the winter.



Ingredients:

- ☐ 500g lamb chops
- ☐ scallions
- ☐ salt
- ☐ caraway seed
- ☐ white pepper

Photo by duitang.com

The Steps:

1. Clean the lamb, and cut it into small slices.
2. Fill your wok halfway with water, and bring it to a boil.
3. Add the lamb slices into the wok, and boil until the lamb begins to float on top of the water.
4. Turn off the wok and pour out the water. Clean the lamb slices with cold water.
5. Fill the wok with more water, and begin boiling over a high flame. Reduce to a medium flame and cook for 90 minutes.
6. Chop the scallions and caraway seed, and add it to the wok.
7. Transfer the soup to a bowl, and season with salt and white pepper before serving.

Nanmen Shuanrou

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